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ABSTRACT

This paper provides some definitions of the components of prejudice, including aspects of counselor prejudice. The paper contends that counselors should use this definition to increase awareness of their own feelings, attitudes, and behaviors associated with levels of prejudice. Since these prejudices can influence counselors' belief systems, counselors must examine prejudices in-depth. Counselors have a responsibility to learn more about which groups receive the most prejudice and oppression in our society and that they should acknowledge members of those groups. By resolving to be role models and leaders, by helping clients, students, and colleagues learn more about prejudice, and by facilitating subsequent constructive change through integration and understanding of the dynamics of prejudice into all aspects of professional and personal realms, counselors can develop the necessary courage to more authentically examine their own behaviors and attitudes and to change on all levels once new information is learned. (MKA)

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Running Head: PREJUDICE

Dynamics off Prejudice: A Proposed Definition and the Counselor's Role in the Evolution of Attitudes

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Dynamics of Prejudice: A Proposed Definition and the Counselor's Role in the Evolution of Attitudes

The role of counselors, and counselor educators, as advocates and leaders, in the reduction of prejudice, cannot be minimized. Not only do prejudice and bias interfere with effective counseling (Carluzzi, Edwards & Ward, 1978), working on the self-awareness components of prejudice leads to a more multiculturally effective counselor (Ivey, 1996). Reducing prejudice is cited as a core area of multicultural competence (Ivey, 1996). As counselors and counselor educators, we must begin with our own self-scrutiny, in order to effectively help others learn more about their prejudices and assumptions about people.

Allport (1958) believed that negative prejudice is to think ill of others, without reason, and that children are not born with inherent prejudices. Prejudice is a construct consisting of a range of beliefs, learned or acquired, in different ways throughout our lives. Goffman (1963) discussed how prejudicial behaviors can lead to oppressed individuals possessing "spoiled identities."

The importance of the construct of prejudice is self-evident, yet it requires further clarification, so that a working definition may serve as a foundation for a counselor's work in this area. Prejudice has been largely viewed in sociological, political and spiritual terms (Allport, 1958). It is useful to adopt the concept of prejudice into a workable construct for the often emotionally charged, interactive situations faced by counselors. Prejudice, in counseling settings, may be broken down into different components for

applications to the counseling process (Katsekas & Lemay, 1987). These components can serve as the basic criteria for self-scrutiny, and self awareness, for counselors and counselor educators, in order that overall multicultural sensitivity is enhanced.

Prejudice appears to have emotional, attitudinal and behavioral components. One emotional component might be fear. For example, a fear of the "unknown" exists in relation to a different culture. Or, a fear of rejection may be elicited, by a "different" person. Emotional components of prejudice may have their roots in childhood, such as vicarious fears of the unknown, often acquired from others, such as from family, peers or the media. Inadequacy, based on one's past experiences, "guilt" as a member of a majority group, "anger" based upon cultural myths or false assumptions, loyalty, or conflicts based on rival attitudes, are some other examples of the emotional undercurrents that might be components of prejudice. Attitudinal areas, such as social conditioning, family values, religious beliefs, political affiliations, and educational experiences or family values also reinforce certain prejudices. Attitudinal areas and emotional areas may overlap with one another, as might behavioral components, with either.

Behavioral components might include body language, verbal tone, social distancing behaviors, and Allport's (1958) four-stage process. Allport's four-stage process includes the levels of behavior that lead to the development of prejudice. As each initial level is tolerated, prejudical behavior leads to the next stage or level. For example, the first stage, is one of "live and let live," or the lowest basic area of prejudice. The second stage is the overt avoidance of certain people or groups in which, if prejudice develops, may lead to the third stage, the openly criticizing certain people or groups, either with people

who have similar prejudices, or with anyone who will listen. As this stage grows, or is tolerated, without any further awareness, the final (fourth) stage is reached, where active persecution, or harm, is tolerated toward certain oppressed people or groups. This may be manifested verbally, in marches, public speeches, or in at outright social ostracization. This final stage, if allowed to fester and grow, often leads to physical harm, or death, of members of any oppressed group. Nazi Germany, the Ku Klux Klan, murderous dictatorships, and political "ethnic cleansings" are all very clear examples of this last stage. Allport (1958) points out that the historical roots of Hitler's regime followed such a pattern in pre-Nazi Germany. Each level, then, leads insidiously to the next, if education and awareness do not happen.

Using these components, we have developed (Katsekas & Lemay, 1987) the following working definition of *"Counselor Prejudice:"*

> *"Counselor Prejudice* is an emotional, attitudinal and behavioral process, within the counselor, which results in reacting to, and stereotyping clients, based on the counselor's own feelings, experiences and/or assumptions, rather than acknowledging the client as a unique, and, initially, unknown individual."

Based upon this definition, counselors and counselor educators can develop more specific educational guidelines, in order to increase the awareness of feelings, attitudes, and behaviors associated with a counselor's level of prejudice. This kind of process may then help to sort out areas which may be blocking the counselor from being maximally facilitative in his or her work. A counselor may then take each component, and list all

factors relevant to his or her work with clients. Counselors could ask themselves how, and when, they have been the recipients of prejudice. Which components can they identify? How might this affect their practice?

Counselors might relate the dynamics of prejudice to their own cultural, and/or family influences, and consider if such influences are a part of the counselor's current belief system. This consideration can be helpful in how one perceives and relates to others. Counselors could look more deeply at their own counseling philosophies, while making an effort to integrate beliefs into such counseling philosophies and subsequent practical work with clients, or students. How does a counselor's social conditioning, ethnic background, educational experience, class and racial awareness, offset the development of a personal theory of counseling?

And finally, behavioral components of prejudice could be examined through the microcounseling training methods of counseling (Ivey, 1996). Silences, use of questions, gestures, eye contact, the behavioral pace of sessions, muscle tightening, hand movements, and so on, are all examples of behavioral components that could be manifestations of feeling prejudice from, or toward, other individuals.

In our work with training counselors, we have found that connecting feelings to such types of behaviors, can often be powerful first steps in discovering the specific effects of prejudicial attitudes. Counselors should also be aware of their emotional, attitudinal and behavior strengths while working with others in a non-prejudicial, multiculturally effective way. Awareness of such strengths serves as a foundation for growth in many interpersonal relationships, such as counseling.

Counselors could engage in many activities to reduce their own prejudices, and utilize them in training others to achieve a greater awareness of prejudice. Processing of one's feelings, either with another, or in a "safe" group; receiving feedback from trusted others about one's own behaviors; and observing and confronting situations and meeting people that seem "different" from one's own self, are effective and easily constructed learning experiences a counselor could create, and utilize in training and educating others. Participation in social or community activities with members of minority groups, learning more about a different culture (such as through reading or travelling), and assisting others in processing their experiences in small groups can be helpful. Frequently video taping of counseling sessions, specifically for this kind of discussion or analysis, or co-leading counseling sessions, or groups, for specific behavioral feedback, are more advanced types of training activities for professional groups of counselors to consider.

This "working definition" of prejudice as an emotional, attitudinal and behavioral process, can be integrated into a counselor's awareness and in relationships with clients and students. Such a definition may assist professional counselors to integrate the concept of advocacy, and "consciousness-raising" concerning prejudice reduction, into our counseling theories, philosophies and practices.

Counselors have a responsibility to learn more about which groups receive the most prejudice and oppression in our society, and to acknowledge members of those groups, within the context of that reality. Counselors can be effective role models for others, in more honestly examining their own prejudices, stereotypes, assumptions and attitudes (on all levels, in the definition of "counselor prejudice"), and in learning more

how such dynamics could manifest themselves in all relationships. By resolving to be role models, and leaders, by helping their clients, students and colleagues learn more about prejudice, and to facilitate subsequent constructive change by integrating an understanding of the dynamics of prejudice into all aspects of professional and personal realms, counselors can develop the necessary courage (Allport, 1958) to more authentically examine their own behaviors and attitudes, and to change on all levels, once new information is learned.

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